8: Merriam& d'Azevedo E-4, 5 (1954-1955) 1957
NT20 Washo NT20

octagonal "church" near Coleville, California, and was known as "the Peyote preacher."

The decline of the movement may be attributed to at least three factors: the aggressiveness and opportunism of Ben Lancaster's leadership, which eventually antagonized the majority of non-Peyotist Washo and encouraged the formation of dissident sects among the Peyotists themselves; the direct threat posed by the new religion to the already weakened influence of the shamans, which united them in concerted and violent attack against it; and the deep schisms effected by the movement in regard to traditional tribal loyalties and family ties, which turned the initial curiosity of the Washo majority to active hostility and rejection. The period of introduction, growth, and decline of the religion from 1936 to 1939 has been studied intensively by two earlier investigators (Stewart 1944; Siskin 1941).

Recent field work indicates a revival of the Peyotist movement among the Washo shortly after 1939. Initiated by a relatively obscure Washo member of the cult, who claimed to have learned a "new way" during a visit to Peyotists in Idaho, the sect was labelled "The Tipi Way." It was set in open opposition to Ben Lancaster's domination and succeeded in attracting a number of former adherents from among the Washo who had become inactive after the 1939 debacle. This sect has undergone many changes of leadership since its inception in 1941–42, but it has persisted with remarkable cohesion to the present time. Relations with other members of the tribe have improved to the extent that the Peyotists are now a tolerated and often respected minority, and carry on their activities openly.

When the original proselyter, Ben Lancaster, died in 1955, there were three distinct sects competing for dominance in the area. One of these was the moribund group referred to as "Lancaster's Way," made up of Washo and Paiute followers who had remained loyal to him. Lancaster's wife and an old Paiute adherent lead the handful of members, and it is known by the latter's name—"J—S——'s Way." A second group is led by a mixed Washo-Paiute individual, and the participants are drawn from his immediate family; it is also referred to as his "Way." However, the largest and most vigorous sect, is "The Tipi Way," which has its center of operations at Woodfords, California, with a substantially Washo membership.

A comparison of the recent total membership of these sects with the participation data presented by Stewart (1944) reveals that there has been a drop from 111 active Peyotists in 1938 to about 78 in 1955. In 1938 there were 37 Washo and 55 Paiute members, while in 1955 fewer than 15 of the active Peyotists are Paiute or of mixed tribal origin. Of the present total membership more than seventy percent attends the meetings of "The Tipi Way" sect.

The members of this dominant sect have initiated and maintained more contact with the Native American Church than have either of the others. Its members make frequent visits to meetings in Idaho and Utah, and informal delegations make pilgrimages to Peyotist centers in Oklahoma, which they consider to be the homeland of the movement. Every few months "runs" are

8: Merriam& d'Azevedo E-4, 5 (1954-1955) 1957
NT20 Washo NT20

Every few months "runs" are made by automobile to Texas and New Mexico in order to replenish dwindling supplies of "the herb" from the "Peyote gardens."

Ritual procedure and ideology has undergone some noteworthy changes since it was first observed by Stewart in 1938. Most of these indicate an alignment with the practices of the Peyotists of eastern tribes as standardized by the Native American Church. Women no longer preside nor do they sing at meetings, as they were encouraged to do during Ben Lancaster's early dominance. It is now considered preferable to hold meetings in a canvas tipi rather than in a member's cabin or temporary windbreak. There is insistence upon members learning "real Peyote songs" rather than bringing "any old song" to meetings as was once allowed. The performance of leaders in conducting meetings and in their personal lives is critically evaluated by the membership in terms of an ideal which is frequently expressed as "the way those old-time Peyote Indians back east do it."

Some changes are especially significant in that they appear to be unique and to suggest Washo cultural influence. Eagle feathers were formerly used by the shaman and were considered too powerful for ordinary people to handle. While used in Peyote today, informants admit that the Washo are not as free with these feathers as are Peyotists in other tribes; the use of eagle feather "fans" is carefully restricted to the "strongest" roadchiefs and old members. Other members make fans from the feathers of various birds, each with its special qualities and degree of "power."

The traditional Washo concept of spirit guidance or power is strenuously opposed by Peyotist ideology. All "power" is in Peyote, and the devout are merely its instruments. Peyote is "good" but the medicines of the old shamans were "bad" because they were the gift from evil forces for the personal gain of the shaman. This has been one of the primary arguments of the local Peyotists in their struggle to defend and improve their status among the more conservative members of the tribe. Many Peyotists take the position that the idea of "power" itself is alien to the true spirit of Peyote, although the same persons may attribute the eclipse of shamanism over the past twenty years to the superior "power" of Peyote. More sophisticated versions of this same view hold that God gave Peyote to man as a weapon to fight evil, and that shamanism was one of the evils. Individual Peyotists accuse one another of causing sickness or death under guidance of malicious spirits, or of secretly making use of Peyotist ritual, song, and medicine as a screen for acquiring personal advantage in "the old way." Coyote, loon, eagle, and snake are seen at meetings and are a sign that some member is clandestinely associated with them.

The rivalry among leading Peyotists for success in curing and ritual proficiency is no less intense than that once exhibited by the shamans in public competitions. Deaths of members or too-frequent failure to cure result in suspicion and the eventual rejection of a leader. Eating of Peyote in large quantities may be admired as a proof of devotion, but it is more likely to be considered as a slightly unethical swaggering too reminiscent of a trick of the old shamans who ate the poisonous wild parsnip to show their "power."